

SUBVERSIVE EFFECTS OF PERVERSION: SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN *THE CANNIBAL MAN**

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While the opening credits run, a series of static shots and pans show the space where much of the action of *The Cannibal Man* (La semana del asesino, Eloy de la Iglesia, 1972) will unfold; a place on the urban fringe, where a line of tall, newly constructed buildings—all of which look the same—ends with a vacant lot. In the middle of the lot, separate and isolated, is a house that is home to the story's protagonist, Marcos (Vicente Parra). Initially, inequality is defined by proportions in the framing of the scene: to the left, the imposing mass of the new building; to the right, the little house in the vacant lot, cut off from all of the roads that run like arteries over the surrounding area. After this, inequality is articulated as an opposition: a single pan from left to right moves from the building and runs over the empty space of the lot until it reaches Marcos' house. The editing thus sets out the context, before a tracking shot takes us into the house to meet Marcos and begin the story. It is a context that juxtapositions the im-

age of Francoist developmentalism with what lies outside it: the underdevelopment of those left out of the progress promoted by the Franco regime.

This opening is not accidental, as it marks a decisive departure from the first films directed by Eloy de la Iglesia, characterised by a certain isolation from the social reality of their time. Although the Basque filmmaker holds a prominent place in film studies covering the period of Spain's transition to democracy, the films he made at the beginning of his career, which cover the last seven years of Franco's dictatorship, have received very little attention. This might be due to the difficulty associated with contextualising the director's work in the cinema of the period: although his films can clearly be classified within commercial genres, he was already displaying a political dimension articulated through the intersection of the sexuality, relationships of domination and social construction of his subjects. Because of this, and due to the commercial focus of his work, it is



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difficult to place it either in the category of dissident or protest cinema, or among the mainstream genre films of the late Francoist period.

Academic studies of the director's work to date have focused mainly on the representation of homosexuality in films like *Hidden Pleasures* (*Los placeres ocultos*, Eloy de la Iglesia, 1977) or *El diputado* (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1978). Such studies have explored the subversion represented in his films by the representation of male bodies as objects of desire (BERZOSA, 2014) or of the reconfiguration that homosexuality represents for patriarchal institutions like the family (TROPIANO, 1997). The analysis proposed in this article will show how these ideas were already a central concern in *The Cannibal Man*, a film that reflects Michel Foucault's idea (2009: 132) that there are class-based sexualities and a bourgeois discourse of sex which, qua technology, "has the objective of producing historical subjects functionalised to a socio-economic and political order that is also historical" (COLAIZZI, 2007: 105). Added to these elements is the presence in the film of Néstor (Eusebio Poncela), the first gay character to appear in Eloy de la Iglesia's filmography. But far from the didactic approach to homosexuality of De la Iglesia's films at the time of the Transition (MELERO, 2010), in *The Cannibal Man* Néstor's homosexuality is not explicitly addressed and needs to be read as part of the network of relationships created by

the discursive texture of the film. In this way, the film, like others by the same director, problematises the increased openness that was beginning to appear in Spanish society to erotic issues, insofar as this openness continued to reinforce a patriarchal and capitalist society.

THE CANNIBAL MAN AND FRANCOIST CENSORSHIP

Eloy de la Iglesia has suggested that *The Cannibal Man* was the first of his films in which ideological questions make an explicit appearance. The aim of the story to explore the functioning of the social order in the final years of Francoism is made explicit in the film's original Spanish title (*La semana del asesino*, or "The Week of the Killer"), with its allusion to the organization of time around the working week, which will then be perverted by the murders committed by the protagonist. The film's plot is simple and direct: while out one Sunday with his girlfriend Paula (Emma Cohen), Marcos gets into a fight with a taxi driver who kicks them out of his vehicle for kissing in the back seat. Marcos hits the taxi driver with a rock and flees the scene with Paula. The next day, they discover that the taxi driver died from the blow. Paula insists on going to the police; to stop her, Marcos kills her too. From this moment, Marcos will go on killing to avoid being handed over to the authorities. While the list of his victims grows, Marcos strikes up a friendship with Néstor, who has witnessed Marcos' murders through his binoculars.

The explicitly ideological intention of *The Cannibal Man* makes it the most problematic film made by Eloy de la Iglesia during the Francoist period. In an interview, De la Iglesia remarked that the film underwent sixty-four cuts (CASTRO, 1974: 228). The censors' record on the film¹ does not clearly establish the number of cuts it underwent, as it only makes reference to modifications (one of which may involve any number of cuts to a scene). But we do have a means of analysing the

cuts imposed on *The Cannibal Man* by the censors: the existence of an international version of the film, still being distributed today in home movie formats in other countries.² In the censors' record, the modifications made to the film can be traced through the letters attached by the producer José Truchado every time a new edit of the film was submitted for approval. The letters list the modifications and deletions made to the final edit, and as all of them match up with shots in the international version that are missing from the Spanish version, I have chosen for my analysis to use that version to comment on any changes of relevance to the meaning posited in my reading of the film. As a side note, this research has found that rather than the sixty-four cuts mentioned by De la Iglesia, the international version contains more than a hundred shots that are missing from the edit of the film released in Spain. In any case, the international version can be used in the analysis in the knowledge that the two versions effectively represent two different textual spaces, as the differences between them reflect changes at the structural level.

The Cannibal Man is hard to pigeonhole in the film production of its day, in spite of being the Eloy de la Iglesia film that most clearly reflects the "edgy look" characteristic of a certain grotesque tradition in Spanish cinema of the 1950s³ (CASTRO DE PAZ and Cerdán, 2011). From that tradition it takes its black humour, which goes beyond the codes of horror that only superficially underpin its images. The political dimension of *The Cannibal Man*, as well as the naturalism with which its images are imbued, also distinguish this work from most Spanish horror films of the period, which were often based on models mimetic of foreign visual styles (Pulido, 2012). However, the rise of the Spanish horror film could be one of the reasons why a film like this one saw the light. When asked whether horror was a pretext for introducing an ideological critique, De la Iglesia replied: "Yes, but in this case the pretext didn't work, ei-

ther for the censors or for audiences. They were mystified by it, they didn't get the humour, or the changes in tone; they found it all disagreeable" (AGUILAR and LLINÁS, 1996: 114). This answer, however, does not seem an accurate reflection of the views contained in the censors' record. When the Censorship Committee approved the second version of the film on 29 September 1971 with a series of instructions, one of the committee members, José María Cano, explained: "[...] I do not believe that it has been differentiated in a discriminatory way from many other films that we have approved on this Committee,"⁴ in a clear reference to the horror genre.⁵

The problems with the censors can be attributed primarily to a superficial question of imagery: naturalistic, grotesque images in their depiction of the violence, and highly expressive. But beyond such aesthetic questions, *The Cannibal Man* formulates a discourse that perverts the dominant ideology of Catholic nationalism and, ultimately, of the relations of production of the capitalist and patriarchal society.

PERVERSION AS SUBVERSION

Various authors have made reference to perversion in the work of Eloy de la Iglesia, but none specify exactly what the term means or what function it fulfils in his films. The filmmaker himself, discussing his work in the Francoist era, speaks of a "language of perversion" that slowly came to dominate and that would find its greatest exponents in *The Cannibal Man* and *Murder in a Blue World* (Una gota de sangre para morir amando, Eloy de la Iglesia, 1973). The director also identifies the function that sexual perversion can fulfil in a context like Francoism: "I think that in the society we live in, sexual perversion is perhaps the only form of rebellion within our reach against the oppressive established order" (CASTRO, 1974: 229). The political effectiveness of perversion, and its effects of social intervention, howev-

er, require a number of clarifications. In his book *Subversion/Perversion*, Mikel Dufrenne (1980) points out the problems associated with the use of the term “perversion”. To pervert means to introduce a change in a particular object or to a subject; therefore, the word “perversion” denotes not so much the efficacy as the nature of an act. This nature has traditionally been associated with a pejorative value judgement, which identifies perversion as wrong and the perverse individual as evil. For this reason, and with respect to political action, Dufrenne prefers the use of the binomial subversion/subvert, which in evaluative terms is neutral and excludes the subject to include the whole system. However, Dufrenne also shows us that perversion can become subversive; because if perversion is an anomaly in relation to the normal, “[p]erversion becomes subversive when it denies all reality insofar as it is norm-referenced, and the norm itself insofar as it is an expression of the system. Thus, when the deviation is, on the one hand, conscious—when the transgression is not merely a craving, but a challenge—and, on the other hand, provocative—when it invites others to become conscious of the system and of what is at once intolerable and vulnerable” (DUFRENNE, 1980: 140). Perversion is therefore posited as a way of challenging the idea of normalcy, as it exposes the arbitrary and oppressive nature of the norms advocated by the dominant ideology. Understood in this way, perversion becomes disengaged from its negative connotations, as it only represents a change from good to evil for the culture or ideology that set the norm.

In *The Cannibal Man* perversion appears on two different levels: firstly, on the narrative level through the actions of its protagonist;⁶ and secondly, through the *mise-en-scène*, which in iconographic terms offers a series of inversions of particular motifs on which the dominant ideology is sustained. It is on this second level, through enunciation, where perversion has subversive effects on the spectator, as it exposes the existence

of the normalised reality and compels the spectator to adopt a position on it.

A READING OF THE CANNIBAL MAN

The structure of the plot is organised around two key elements: the days of the week that constitute the “week of the killer” referred to in the original Spanish title (each day of the week is identified by the appearance of an intertitle; the film begins on a Sunday and ends the following Sunday night); and the series of murders committed by the protagonist. In terms of the causal relations that tie the narrative events together, this structure makes it clear why Marcos commits the murders he does. An explanation guided exclusively by the denotative level of the narration would be: in an effort to conceal the first murder (which was accidental), all of the murders are merely a strategy to mask the first one and prevent other characters from handing Marcos over to the police. The protagonist makes this refusal to give himself up explicit in various dialogues. However, an exploration of the political dimension of the film necessarily involves the proposition of a connotative meaning behind these killings. The most widely accepted explanation, given by the filmmaker himself, is that the characters that Marcos kills embody different forms of repression rejected by the protagonist (CASTRO, 1974: 229). But this assertion is only accurate if we assume that all the individuals killed by Marcos over the course of the story share a common feature: their internalisation of the dominant ideology and their recognition of themselves as subjects interpellated by that ideology, thereby accepting a place and certain functions within the social order. In this sense, Marcos’ victims, immersed in the mechanism of interpellation, contribute both to the perpetuation of the ideology and to the reproduction of the relations of production, using the definition of the functioning of ideology and interpellation developed by Louis Althusser (1988).

In contrast, Marcos is presented from the outset with problems as a functional subject. In the film's very first dialogue, which takes place while he is eating at the local bar, the bar's owner, Rosa (Vicky Lagos), asks him about his plans for Sunday; when he tells her he is going out with Paula, she replies: "It's high time you found yourself a woman to marry." Later, the relationship between Marcos and Paula is presented as abnormal. She is concealing the relationship from her family because they believe that she is going out with boys her age, and she remarks to Marcos: "You have no idea how they'd react if they knew I'm going out with a man like you." When they are about to go back home, Paula looks sullen. Marcos asks her what is wrong, to which she replies: "Sometimes I think we'll never get married. Men your age go out with younger girls to get married right away. But you never talk about it. You only talk about the factory, about your work, not that you're getting a raise and we're going to get married." Right after this comes the murder that serves as the plot trigger. Marcos and Paula hail a taxi; the driver (Goyo Lebrero), seeing the couple kissing in the back seat, stops the taxi and kicks them out. The taxi driver rebukes them for their behaviour, and again there is a reference to the age difference between the two: "If you were my daughter I would let you have it. Even if you were with a boy your age." Marcos and Paula get out of the taxi without paying and the driver demands payment for the ride; Marcos gets into a fight with him. When Paula intervenes, the taxi driver slaps her and says: "Now you'll see, I'm going to give you all the wallops your father should have given you." In one of the devices used repeatedly by the filmmaker throughout his career, while the taxi driver speaks these words and raises his hand, the camera is positioned along the axis of the characters' gazes, in this case with a shot from Paula's point of view, which means that the taxi driver is looking directly at the camera. There is no distancing effect here, but rather an emotional



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impact on the spectator, who is the target of the same aggression aimed at the character in the story, and thus is also positioned as a victim of the reactionary mentality expressed by the taxi driver through the dialogue and his physical violence. Marcos intervenes by hitting the taxi driver with a rock, and then flees the scene with Paula. They don't know what state the taxi driver is in and won't discover his death until the next day. This first killing already constitutes a reaction by Marcos against a reactionary morality. However, this killing is different from all the others: the taxi driver has no relationship with Marcos and the situation has none of the parallels that will later be established between Marcos' regular job, his status as a factory worker and the method he uses to kill his victims.

After an ellipsis, an intertitle announces that it is Monday and Marcos is back at work as usual in the Flory Soup factory. The *mise-en-scène* is constructed around the disciplinary nature of the factory and its capacity for organising the lives of the workers. With their straight linear movements, the different tracking shots used to show Marcos working in the slaughterhouse evoke the linear nature of assembly line production; and this assembly line production is in turn transferred to the production of the subjects, a point that becomes clear when Marcos goes to see the boss. In the scene that takes place inside his of-



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fice, the boss (Ismael Merlo), with his secretary as a witness, tells Marcos that he is getting a promotion. The boss gives a vehement speech in which he explains that for the promotion he took into account not only Marcos' years of experience, but also the memory of his mother, who had worked at the factory as well and had died in a workplace accident. This allusion to Marcos' mother underscores the reproduction of the relations of production: a factory worker whose son is also a factory worker, carrying on his mother's work in the same factory. The boss' enthusiastic speech

ends when he turns to the secretary and, with a change of expression, barks out: "Next!" The presentation of the scene steers clear of the use of an establishing shot that would show all three characters together in the frame, instead employing a fragmenting technique with medium and close shots of each one. A triangle is thus created in the scene in which Marcos' notably indifferent gaze swings between the boss, sitting in front of him, and his secretary, who is positioned to his left. The edit splices together various shots from Marcos' point of view showing him staring at the secretary's legs, protruding from a tiny miniskirt. Marcos' gaze thus creates an axis which, in the triangle of the scene, unites a representative of economic production with an image of sexuality.

It will be after leaving work with his new promotion that Marcos discovers the taxi driver's death and discusses it with Paula. The two of them, in Marcos' house, decide what to do. Marcos asks Paula to trust him and reassures her that everything will be alright. They kiss. The camera then begins a tracking shot that moves away from the two characters kissing on the couch and over to the empty bed in the bedroom. In the Spanish version of the film, the sex scene between Marcos and Paula that appears in the international version is eliminated completely. From the empty bed that ends the tracking shot, we cut to a shot of the two characters lying in bed after having made love. Paula cries over what they have done—from the dialogue it is clear that she has lost her virginity—and Marcos starts kissing her again to console her. The shot frames the characters from a position at the bottom of the bed, through the bars of the bed-frame, thereby connecting the idea of a prison to what they have done and negating any reading of sexual relations as liberating. The sexual act results in a change in Paula's thinking about her relationship with Marcos. Thus, she suggests that they should make the decision together about whether or not to tell the police about the killing. Sex induces in Paula the idea of a new power over



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Marcos' life: "After that, we should do everything together," she says, gesturing to the bedroom. Marcos answers that her family doesn't even know that she's going out with him, but Paula replies: "But we have to tell them. Because you want to marry me, right?" This response leaves no room for doubt: sex is tied to a series of implications related to the production of the subjects in capitalist society. For Paula, the act is essentially associated with a change in their relationship, founded on the idea of establishing a family unit. Thus, the sexual liberation that was beginning to take hold in Spanish society is not a mere liberation of desire, but instead a reinforcement of the patriarchal society and discourse. And furthermore, through this new power conferred by the sexual act, Paula is now also in a position to demand from Marcos an "ought to be" as a man. When Marcos again refuses to go to the police, Paula holds nothing back in expressing her view of him: "I trusted you. Sure, the mature man, strong, dependable. Do you know what you are? A loser who is full of fear. I don't know why you're so afraid of jail. I mean, just to live in this shack and go on being a factory worker all your life." The argument ends when, after kissing, Marcos kills Paula by strangling her.⁷ This is not the only time in the story when the sexual act is followed by a murder, as the same thing will happen to Rosa, the last victim of Marcos' murders. And both of these two cases

presents not a transcendent view of the sex/death binomial, but a rejection of a social mechanism. Rosa, who we know has had her eyes on Marcos for some time, shows up at his home to bring him breakfast. The two have sexual relations; after the sex, Rosa starts trying to cleaning up the house, already assigning herself a role in the domestic space associated with marriage. Marcos kills her when she tries to go clean up the bedroom, where the corpses of his previous victims are all piled up.

All of the killings committed to cover up the death of the taxi driver involve a series of characters associated with the institution of the family: after killing his girlfriend, Paula, Marcos kills his brother, Esteban (Charly Bravo); then his brother's fiancée, Carmen (Lola Herrera); and then Carmen's father (Fernando Sánchez Pollock). And all of these victims have something that distinguish them from the first two: the perversion of different objects associated with work in the slaughterhouse—an adjustable spanner, a knife, a butcher's axe—that cease to fulfil their *natural* function associated with the worker's labour to become instruments of death. Moreover, all of the killings occur in Marcos' home. In the structure of the story, the series of deaths in the domestic space might seem implausible, but this is a matter of little importance from the perspective of its meaning, as Marcos' house is turned into a *slaughterhouse* that perverts his work in the factory.

The perversion affects not only the actions and objects involved, but also the symbolic nature of certain images. As noted above, Marcos starts piling up the corpses in the bedroom of his house. After killing Carmen, he carries her to the bedroom and drops her on the bed next to Esteban. The composition of the frame is similar to that of the scene when Marcos kisses Paula on the bed: the position of the camera at the foot of the bed uses the structure as a kind of internal frame. Later, when Ambrosio discovers the bodies of his daughter and her fiancée, they appear on the bed covered by a white sheet, as if they were a peace-

fully sleeping married couple. The mise-en-scène is a macabre perversion of the couple's fate, a marriage whose consummation was stopped short by murder.

As mentioned previously, all of the points raised up to now interact in the film's discourse on sexuality, and it is here where Néstor also fits in. The relationship between Marcos and Néstor is posited as an alternative to all the repressive situations experienced by Marcos, and particularly those expressly related to sexuality. However, to explain the meaning of this relationship

us inside his home. There we find Marcos, who walks into the living room and lights up a cigarette while staring at the posters of women in swimsuits that cover one of the walls. He then flops down onto the couch, and we cut to a vertical pan that runs up the façade of the newly constructed building located opposite his house. Following the pan, there is another cut to a shot of Néstor, his torso exposed, looking through his binoculars from one of the balconies of the building. The editing then follows the usual shot-reverse shot structure to present the point of view



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we need to refer to the international version of the film, as it is the element of the story that was mutilated most by the censors. After the opening shots mentioned above that present the landscape around Marcos' home, a tracking shot takes



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of Néstor, who, after watching some boys playing with a ball in the vacant lot, spies on Marcos through the skylight in the roof of his house. Here is where the differences between the Spanish version and the international version begin to appear. A comparison of the two versions reveals, first of all, that several shots of Néstor looking through the binoculars have been eliminated from the Spanish version.⁸ But the most serious cuts, to the point that they completely distort the meaning of the sequence, are related to the posters hanging on the wall in Marcos' house. In the Spanish version Néstor spies on Marcos, and from his point of view we see a series of shots showing the character lying back on the sofa inside the house. From this point the censor required sever-



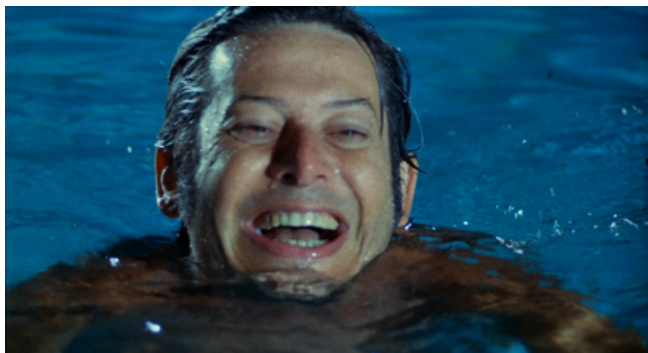
al shots to be cut—a total of eight shots included in the international version—that alternate between detail shots of the posters and close-ups of Marcos shaking his head one edge of the frame to the other. This series of shots presents Marcos as experiencing more perturbation than enjoyment with the pictures on the posters, which represent a type of masculine imagery typical of the era. Marcos' conflictive relationship with this imagery is expressed in two shots which, through internal framing, show the character trapped in the frame. The first shot is from the point of view of Néstor, spying on Marcos with his binoculars, framed in the grill of the skylight. The other shot serves to end the sequence in both versions: the agitation we saw Marcos suffering—at least in the international version—is now over, and we see a close-up of the character through the wicker mesh of a rocking chair; on this frame, three zooms open up the scale to show the character trapped between the posters (situated above Marcos' reclining figure), the furniture of the house and the mesh of the chair. In opposition to this heterosexual imagery in which Marcos appears to be trapped, the editing places the gaze of Néstor, who eroticises Marcos' body through the close-ups of his sweaty torso.

The friendship between Marcos and Néstor develops over the course of several sequences in which the two characters are depicted as dysfunctional in relation to their social class. Néstor



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expresses this in a conversation with Marcos: "I'm thinking that we are a pair of weirdos. I should be, like you say, with people of my age, dancing in



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a discotheque, spending the summer in Torremolinos and speeding down the highway at 90 miles an hour; and you should be married, with a woman who's starting to get a little chubby, a couple of kids, with a bill due on the washing machine, and with the dream that one day you'll have the money to buy a big sedan." Néstor later adds: "I have a friend with a long beard and very thick glasses, who would say that you and I are a couple of '*desclasados*.'" The Spanish term '*desclasados*', referring to people who fail to respect class boundaries, is unfamiliar to Marcos and he reacts with a puzzled look, thus reaffirming the lack of awareness of the working class, an idea that would reappear in other films by Eloy de la Iglesia. The character of Néstor is thus established as a refuge and a source of freedom for Marcos, an idea that is made clear in the night-time visit the two make to a swimming pool, the sequence with the most cuts imposed by the censors in the Spanish version. In this sequence, the two characters jump off the diving board into the pool; after a few brief shots of the two in the water, a cut introduces a

short ellipsis and we see the two characters sitting back in a pair of hammocks. This brief scene contrasts with the sequence as it was actually filmed and as it appears in the international version. In particular, once they have jumped into the pool, the edit lingers over the games the two play in the water. Marcos smiles openly for the first time in the whole film; then the two characters continue the game under the water, in a sequence shown with various underwater shots. The homoeroticism of all the action, which concludes with the two characters showering together after leaving the pool, is explicit. The whole sequence also uses extradiegetic music with a markedly dream-like tone, which underscores the liberating effect of the relationship for Marcos, who, significantly, falls asleep in the car while Néstor drives him home.

Although the censors ordered the shots that articulate the desire between the two male characters to be cut from the Spanish version (with the exception of Néstor's initial gaze at Marcos' body), the relationship between the two constructs a space far removed from the norms and obligations imposed by the dominant ideology; a space in which a different form of masculinity can also be constructed. At the end of the film, Néstor will imply in a dialogue with Marcos that he knows everything that has happened, and will offer to help him. Marcos, however, rejects his help and calls the police to give himself up. This is an ending that was imposed by the censors⁹ which, nevertheless, fails to tarnish one of the most subversive works of Spanish cinema in the final years of the Franco regime. ■

NOTES

- * This research has been undertaken in the context of the R+D+i Research Project "El cine y la televisión en España de la post-Transición (1979-1992)" directed by Manuel Palacio [Ref. CSO2012-31895], Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, Government of Spain.

- 1 The documents referred to here are from the box of the General Archives of the Administration with code 36/04220, File No. 65,940, for the Censorship Committee of the Film Censorship and Evaluation Board.
- 2 For this analysis I have compared two different international editions: the DVD distributed in the United Kingdom by Blue Underground and the German Blu-ray distributed by Subkulture Entertainment. Both editions, with the title *Cannibal Man*, are licensed by Atlas International, and therefore have the same running time.
- 3 In the interview *Conocer a Eloy de la Iglesia*, Carlos Aguilar and Francisco Llinás ask Eloy de la Iglesia about the relationship between the film and the grotesque tradition, represented by Marco Ferreri and Fernando Fernán-Gómez. In his answer De la Iglesia highlights the presence of poor characters in the Spanish cinema of the 1950s, even in films with reactionary positions like *Furrows* (*Surcos*, José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1951). He then points out that this whole critical approach would be lost in the years that followed: "But when developmentalism began to take over, when the technocrats arrived, anything that might have been left over from Christian or radicalised Falangist cinema, like *Surcos* or *El inquilino*, was swept off the screen. Leftist cinema didn't touch the topic, and Bardem's films, for example, were more focused on the middle classes, on the petit bourgeoisie. [...] In *The Cannibal Man* I had the conviction that to give a leading role to a particular social class would be something of a wake-up call" (AGUILAR and LLINÁS, 1996: 111).
- 4 The documentation related to the censors' previous review of the screenplay can be consulted in the General Archives of the Administration (AGA), in the box with code 36/05086. The script on file at the AGA is the second version, dated 29 July 1971, with 219 pages, and can be found in the box with code 36/05584.
- 5 However, once the censors saw the finished film, some in their evaluations were critical of the fact that the script had been approved and that the production of the film had been permitted. For example, at the Censorship Committee meeting on 24 January 1972, Elisa de Lara commented: "If it weren't Spanish I would ban it without hesitation. [...] Therefore, and with the greatest of reluctance, I approve it for viewers over 18, and with the highest possible number of cuts." At the meeting on 15 February 1972, De Lara reiterated her view that the film was "repugnant," but maintained her argument that it could no longer be banned after the investment that the producers had made.
- 6 One of the factors that for Dufrenne distinguish perversion from subversion is the intention of the act. In this sense, Marcos does not kill with the intention of having a subversive effect on the system; his reaction is unconscious, although the spectator may infer from it an expression of what Dufrenne calls the "sense of the intolerable" (DUFRENNE, 1980: 45).
- 7 Again, the international version includes shots of the killing which were cut from the Spanish version. The cuts affect the duration of the killing, eliminating shots that alternate between close-ups of the mouths of the two characters kissing with Marcos' fingers squeezing Paula's throat.
- 8 The censors insisted right up to the last moment that all of the shots of Néstor should be cut, which led José Truchado to explain in a letter that, in accordance with the "cinematographic metric," the shots of Néstor could not be cut because his point of view was used in the arrangement of the sequence. This explanation saved the shots of the character looking through his binoculars that appear in the Spanish version. It is worth noting that already in their reports the censors had understood that the character of Néstor was gay and that they wanted to eliminate his presence wherever possible.
- 9 On this point, Eloy de la Iglesia remarks: "I have to point out that the ending to the film is not mine; it was imposed by the censors, and we even shot it months later, when there was already a standard copy. It's stupid that the character, just to be nice, would call the police to give himself up." (AGUILAR and LLINÁS, 1996: 110).

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SUBVERSIVE EFFECTS OF PERVERSION: SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE CANNIBAL MAN

Abstract

The objective of this article is to offer a reading of *The Cannibal Man* (La semana del asesino, Eloy de la Iglesia, 1972). The film, which underwent numerous changes on the orders of Franco's censors, uses perversion to challenge the values of the dominant ideology. *The Cannibal Man* explores the connection between sexuality and the production of functional subjects for the maintenance of the social order. In this context, it is interesting to analyse the presence of the first gay character in Eloy de la Iglesia's filmography because, in spite of the attempts by the censors to minimise his presence in the film, his relationship with the protagonist of the story contributes to the destabilisation of masculine imagery and of the patriarchal discourse.

Key words

Eloy de la Iglesia; *The Cannibal Man*; perversion; subversion; sexuality; censorship.

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EFFECTOS SUBVERSIVOS DE LA PERVERSIÓN: SEXUALIDAD Y CONSTRUCCIÓN SOCIAL EN LA SEMANA DEL ASESINO

Resumen

El objetivo del presente artículo es realizar una lectura de *La semana del asesino* (Eloy de la Iglesia, 1972). La película, que sufrió numerosas modificaciones a causa de la censura franquista, emplea la perversión para impugnar los valores de la ideología dominante. En *La semana del asesino* se aborda el vínculo entre la sexualidad y la producción de sujetos funcionales para el mantenimiento del orden social. En ese marco cabe analizar la presencia del primer personaje gay en la filmografía de Eloy de la Iglesia; porque, a pesar de los intentos de la censura por minimizar su presencia en el relato, su relación con el protagonista de la historia contribuye a la desestabilización de los imaginarios masculinos y del discurso patriarcal.

Palabras clave

Eloy de la Iglesia; *La semana del asesino*; perversión; subversión; sexualidad; censura.

Autor

Carlos Gómez acaba de obtener el doctorado en Comunicación Audiovisual por la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, donde también desempeña su labor docente. Es especialista en el análisis del discurso fílmico y actualmente prepara una monografía sobre el cine de Eloy de la Iglesia. Contacto: cagomez@hum.uc3m.es.

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